

MEMORANDUM TO CABINET
BY THE
 HON. MINISTER OF PUBLIC BUILDING
 AND WORKS

The North West Development Plan.

1. Following pressure from all quarters, my predecessor, issued directives for the drawing up of a Development Plan for the whole of the Area north of the Victoria Lines, where demands for building are most numerous and pressing. Moreover, this region has perhaps the greatest tourist potential and it is therefore of the utmost importance that only planned development should be permitted.

2. The Plan has been prepared by three Public Works Department architects who by reason of specialised studies abroad in planning are fully qualified to undertake the arduous task entrusted to them.

3. The Hon. Minister of Works and Housing had laid down the following conditions to be observed:-

- (i) cover the area north of the Victoria Lines;
- (ii) respect the agricultural land, fertile valleys, afforested areas and those earmarked for afforestation;
- (iii) respect the landscape and beautiful panoramas and possibly improve them;
- (iv) in so far as it is compatible with the above principles the planners should, whenever possible and practicable, consider the applications already submitted to the Department.

4. The planners have respected fully the brief given to them, more especially re the preservation of the agricultural areas, and of the landscape and beautiful panoramas which fall within the Region.

At the same time, they are proposing for development a number of zones which between them total some 4,000 tumoli and therefore provide for a considerable area of land which could be released for building purposes. The bulk of this land is likely to be taken up by private developers who are catering mostly for the permanent "tourist" or those tourists who intend to stay for prolonged periods and therefore prefer living independently rather than in a hotel.

5. The principles and objects of the proposed plan are:-

- (a) To allocate sufficient land to meet the needs of an expanding tourist industry and to guide this development to suitable pockets;
- (b) To incorporate the existing schemes which are intended to provide ample space for the accommodation of a population which is materially increased during the summer season;
- (c) To minimise the amount of agricultural land to be absorbed by new development;
- (d) To conserve and improve the amenities of the area;
- (e) To provide for the improvement of the present system of road communications;
- (f) To encourage the afforestation of the region and to preserve the existing trees.

6. In indicating the areas for new development the planners have included all these areas where possible development can take place. This includes all those areas which because of exposure or other physical drawbacks are less suited for agricultural development. In those areas for which no proposals are shown on the outline map, it is intended that the existing use of land will remain for the most part undisturbed. The planners would like to establish a policy of security or encouraging the preservation and planting of trees wherever appropriate, on both privately and publicly owned land.

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A preservation plan has been prepared showing areas most suited for the planting of trees. In appropriate cases, as a condition of planning permission, developers would be required to submit a scheme of planting to be carried out in connection with development.

7. Areas are allocated in the plan primarily for tourist development use. Such allocations do not imply that all other uses will be excluded from these areas; indeed it is proposed that all other applications for permission to develop in such an area will be dealt with on their merits.

8. The 4,000 tumoli of land proposed to be developed as indicated consist mainly of rocky and agriculturally poor land, all with fine views. A set of conditions to be imposed in developing the areas accompanies the scheme. These conditions aim at preserving as much as possible the scenic beauty of the region. Agricultural land has been shown to remain in its existing use as far as possible.

9. The region has several areas of special landscape value, such as valleys and beaches of outstanding natural beauty. These are being preserved. At the same time the plan indicates areas suitable for afforestation. Tree planting in sheltered areas near valleys is considered a very important part of the plan.

10. The Planners strongly recommend that the following policies generally applicable to the country

4/as a whole, be applied

as a whole, be applied to the areas earmarked for development:-

- (a) the protection of the landscape and of the old traditional buildings and traditional environment;
- (b) the safeguarding of agricultural and rights of way;
- (c) tree preservation and tree planting;
- (d) the mitigation of disfigurement due to unsatisfactory development, quarrying or advertisements;
- (e) the control of new development with regards to its effect on the landscape;

11. Besides, the planners have proposed that in implementing the Plan various norms of architectural control should be followed.

12. Since the above mentioned Plan was finalised the Report on the Master Plan for Malta Tourism prepared by the United Nations' experts (ITALCONSULT) has been received. Both plans provide for development within the region but whereas the plan prepared by the Public Works Department has given considerable weight to the preservation of land for agricultural use, and has sited most of the development on rocky outcrops, the plan submitted by the United Nations' Experts has given paramount importance to the needs of tourism and totally excluded all other forms of land use. For example, while Italconsult propose developing the whole fertile Ġnejna Valley, the Public Works Department planners have provided four zones of development situated on the barren rocky outcrops which surround the fertile valley, leaving this entirely for agricultural use and possibly for afforestation.

5/13. I consider that agricultural.....

13. I consider that agriculture is an essential use not only because fertile areas in the Island are very limited and should not therefore be further encroached upon, but also because it is the Government's declared policy to promote agriculture. Under the circumstances it is felt that any proposals which fail to take account of the need of the agricultural land are not based on the best possible use of land in Malta. I must add that Mr Paterson, United Nations' adviser, has, in his report remarked that the Italconsult report provides such factual data as one basis for planning. As regards the North West Regional Plan prepared by the Public Works Department, Mr Paterson states that it demonstrates considerable progress towards the completion of a National Plan. He has shown himself highly appreciative of the work done in the Regional Plan. In view of the proposed visit to Malta of a United Nations team for the preparation of a Development Plan for the whole of Malta the Director of Public Works has suggested that Government should not commit itself by publishing this plan. However, Hon. Ministers are no doubt aware of the pressure there is for the development of the area and I do not consider that Government is justified in delaying further, especially as I have committed myself in public and in the House. Nor am I of the opinion that only private land be released for development leaving Government land for a decision in conjunction with the Plan for the whole Island. The publication of the North West Regional Plan is a long awaited step and it is therefore recommended that Hon. Ministers agree with the above conclusions and approve the North west Regional Plan outlined above as drafted by the Public Works Department architects as against the plan proposed by Italconsult which ignores completely the interests of agriculture. After approval a considerable amount of work will still be required to

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